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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

All media reported that the IDF is planning to complete its deployment today along a new defensive line in southern Lebanon about six to eight kilometers north of the Israeli border. The area that the IDF has brought under its control is comparable to the security zone it maintained until the pullout from Lebanon in May 2000, except for the area northeast of Metulla where the IDF has opted not to operate. Israel intends to maintain this security zone until the deployment of a multinational force in the area.

All media reported that in fighting yesterday, an IDF soldier died and dozens of Hizbullah fighters were killed. At least 14 other IDF soldiers were injured, two of them seriously, the rest lightly. Also on Wednesday, more than 200 rockets struck northern Israel, a record number since the outbreak of war three weeks ago. One of the rockets killed 52-year old Dave Lalchuk in Kibbutz Sa'ar, north of Nahariya. Lalchuk was a Boston native who immigrated to Israel some 20 years ago. (The media reported that another American Israeli, Michael Levin, 21, was killed earlier this week. Levin moved to Israel three years ago from the suburbs of Philadelphia.) A long-range, Iranian-made Khaybar missile fired by Hizbullah, landed near Jenin, in the West Bank.

Maariv reported that the purpose of IDF commando raids in Lebanon is to obtain information about the two IDF soldiers abducted by Hizbullah. The newspaper and other media said that the raid on a Baalbek hospital on Tuesday night was meant to show Hizbullah that the IDF is able to strike its relatively safe home front.

Leading media reported that the US and France are working on shaping a compromise UN Security Council resolution (which Yediot dubbed a "delay mechanism"), according to which the Council would first declare the cessation of fighting and declare a cease-fire only a few days later. The proposed draft resolution allegedly stipulates that the territory between the Israel-Lebanon border and the Litani River would be demilitarized. Israel Radio said that this is only one of the proposed compromises, and quoted US administration sources as saying that that no resolution will be passed before Monday.

Maariv quoted King Abdullah II of Jordan as saying in an interview to be published today by the Jordanian newspaper Al Rai that it will pay a hefty price in the future for its behavior vis-a-vis the Palestinians and Lebanon. Also citing interviews of King Abdullah II in Jordanian papers, Israel Radio quoted him as saying that if the fighting in Lebanon continues, and no peaceful solution is found, organizations like Hizbullah will appear in other Arab countries. So long as there is occupation and aggression, there will be resistance and it will receive popular support, he was quoted as saying. Asked whether the Jordanian Ambassador will be sent back to Israel, the King said Jordan will do everything that will serve its own interests and those of Lebanon and the Palestinians. Ha'aretz printed an AP dispatch that Egyptian FM Ahmed Ali Abu al-Gheit warned Wednesday that Israel's fight against Hizbullah in Lebanon should end immediately before it involves other parties, apparently referring to Syria, a key supporter of the Lebanese militant group.

All media reported that the interview PM Ehud Olmert gave AP on Wednesday, suggesting that the war in Lebanon could serve as a

catalyst for reviving the realignment plan, has enraged settlers and Israeli right-wing supporters. "I'll surprise you," Olmert said. "I genuinely believe the outcome of the present [conflict] and the emergence of a new order that will provide more stability and will defeat the forces of terror will help create the necessary environment that will allow me ... to create a new momentum between us and the Palestinians." He went on to reiterate that "we want to separate from the Palestinians. I'm ready to do it. I'm ready to cope with these demands. It's not easy, it's very difficult, but we are elected to our positions to do things and not to sit idle." Leading media reported that Olmert later clarified his position to Knesset Member Effi Eitam (National Union-National Religious Party), telling him that the war is the result of the attack that Hizbullah initiated against Israel, and that it is not related to diplomatic moves.

Israel Radio reported that last night the IAF carried out three strikes in the Rafah area of the Gaza Strip, killing three Palestinians (an activist from Islamic Jihad, another from Hamas, and a civilian). The media reported that on Wednesday a Qassam rocket landed in Ashkelon's industrial zone, lightly wounding one person. A second Qassam landed in a Western Negev community.

Maariv cited the growing assessment of the IDF that some of the harsh pictures from the scene of the Qana killings were faked. The newspaper said that army sources are not ready to talk about that possibility, "because anyway the world does not believe us." Maariv also featured Hizbullah's manipulation of the foreign media in Beirut.

Yediot cited the assessment of the Israeli defense establishment that following the fighting in Lebanon and threats by Iran, the US will supply Israel with F22 Stealth fighter planes. The newspaper report that the cost of such an aircraft is around USD 150 million. Yediot also cited the assessment of the Israeli defense establishment that the US administration will significantly increase financial assistance for the American-Israeli project to develop missile-interception systems.

Leading media reported that citing intelligence alerts of possible violence, Jerusalem police announced Wednesday that the Temple Mount will be closed to non-Muslim visitors on Thursday, as Israel marks Tisha Be'av (the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av) and the destruction of the biblical Jewish temples.

The Jerusalem Post reported that reported that Rabbi David Wolpe, who heads Temple Sinai in Los Angeles, led his congregants and others from the LA Jewish community on a two-day solidarity mission to Israel, bringing with them over USD 1 million in donations. Israel Radio reported that a group of 40 young American college students, most of them non-Jews, have not renounced a planned trip to Israel and will "learn how a democratic state copes with terrorism."

Ha'aretz reported that Finance Minister Abraham Hirschson announced Tuesday that the GOI has posted information and updates on the emergency situation in northern Israel on the government portal GOV.IL (English web page: <http://gov.il/firstgov/english>).

Yediot reported that Israeli tourists were attacked in Turkey. The media reported on anti-Semitic incidents in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

Mideast:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "This is the time to tell the people the truth, and the Prime Minister and the rest of the government's spokespersons would do well to spare the public their empty talk of 'unprecedented achievements' as Katyusha rockets land all over the Galilee." The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Why has this war won such backing? Why have anti-war rallies in Israel drawn only a few hundred people, and why haven't we seen a large

Peace Now demonstration against the war?"

Veteran journalist Yaron London wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: " If Hamas and Islamic Jihad are not deterred ... there is no reason to assume that the fanatic organization beyond Israel's northern border will leave us in peace."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Olmert has the right to work toward the realignment plan.... But right now there's a war on."

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote on page one of Ha'aretz: "Under Article 7 [of the UN Charter], Israel [would] be unable to carry out aerial reconnaissance missions in order to identify possible Hizbullah preparations for an offensive."

Columnist Avraham Tal wrote in Ha'aretz: "The war in Lebanon is first and foremost a war to rehabilitate Israel's deterrent power in the eyes of the wild Middle East."

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "Welcome to the Middle East, Israel. And paradoxically, precisely thanks to your playing by the rules, the Middle East will accept you. This time it will have no choice."

Columnist Moti Zaft wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "Why should Olmert have tied the realignment ... to the IDF's successes in Lebanon?"

Diplomatic correspondent Dov Kontorer wrote in conservative Russian-language Vesty: "Olmert tries to present the situation in such a way that a successful conclusion of the war becomes an argument in favor of [his] political agenda."

Block Quotes:

I. "What About the Missiles?"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (8/3): "'Israel is succeeding in this war and is making unparalleled, perhaps unprecedented, achievements,' Ehud Olmert said [Tuesday at Israel's National Defense College].... The Israeli public, especially the one bearing the main brunt of this war, is entitled to receive a more realistic account of the war's achievements so far. The home front, whose fortitude politicians and officers praise so much, is entitled to know which war objectives have been attained, which are still to be attained, and which perhaps will not be attained at all. Hence, this is the time to tell the people the truth, and the Prime Minister and the rest of the government's spokespersons would do well to spare the public their empty talk of 'unprecedented achievements' as Katyusha rockets land all over the Galilee."

II. "Own Goal"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (8/3): "Olmert has the right to work toward the realignment plan. If he passes it in the Knesset, we will all have to obey and carry it out. But right now there's a war on. During a war, it is better to be smart than to be right.... You will have enough time for realignment, Mr. Olmert. Finish the planning stage, ponder, be persuaded, and after that, persuade us. It is doubtful whether you will succeed. And if you do succeed, I tip my hat to you. We will do it together. But first of all, we need to win this war. You need to decide whether you are the prime minister of realignment or the Prime Minister of Israel. Israel needs you today, even more than it needs realignment."

III. "Beyond the Straits"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (8/3): "Despite international calls for a cease-fire, a series of public polls indicates the IDF operation against Hizbullah in Lebanon, now in its third week, still enjoys the support of a majority of Israelis. In the latest survey by the Geocartography Institute on Tuesday, a day on which three soldiers were killed in Lebanon, 56 percent of those surveyed said they believed the fighting must go on. And polls published in the local press show that more than 80 percent of Israelis back the war.... Why has this war won such backing? Why have anti-war rallies in Israel drawn only a few hundred people, and why haven't we seen a large Peace Now demonstration against the war? The simple answer is that it is a just campaign.... But perhaps there is a psychological reason too that people pulled together. Perhaps Israelis of all political persuasions were yearning for a common cause to bring them closer.... What better national glue than a common enemy in the form of a cruel terrorist organization bent on Israel's destruction, sponsored by Iran and aided by Syria, spitting in the face of UN resolutions that called for its disarmament? Yet in spite of the broad support for the war, there are an increasing number of voices beginning to question the way the operation has been conducted. "

IV. "We Have Not Changed the Face of the Middle East"

Veteran journalist Yaron London wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (8/3): "In the speech that the Prime Minister delivered Tuesday at [Israel's] National Defense College, he declared that the face of the Middle East has already changed. In which sense has it changed? The only meaning that can be construed from the speech is that Israel has recovered its deterrent capability. 'Deterrent capability' is no minor matter, but one would be well-advised to remember that almost all of our wars started when Israel believed that it could scare its enemies. If Hamas and Islamic Jihad are not deterred, despite the fact that we are ceaselessly killing their people, there is no reason to assume that the fanatic organization beyond Israel's northern border will leave us in peace. Its fanaticism stems from deep wells that we do not have the power to dry up."

IV. "Time Is of the Essence"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote on page one of Ha'aretz (8/3): "Now, there is talk of basing the cease-fire on Article 7 [of the UN Charter], which ... includes the threat of sanctions. The danger is that sanctions will apply to both sides. This may make it very difficult for Israel to defend itself, even if it argues self-defense. Thus, under Article 7, Israel will be unable to carry out aerial reconnaissance missions in order to identify possible Hizbullah preparations for an offensive. Israel has already voiced its concerns to the Americans, who have displayed an understanding; but not so the French. Israel and the United States are also of one mind on the need to supervise the border crossings between Syria and Lebanon so that Hizbullah will not be re-supplied by Iran."

VI. "Deterrence Put to the Test"

Columnist Avraham Tal wrote in Ha'aretz (8/3): "Since the outbreak of the war in the north, changes have been made to its defined objectives, which, for the most part, have been scaled down in response to newly exposed limitations on the ground. But one supreme objective remains unchanged -- the restoration of Israel's deterrence.... Arab nations, hostile and less hostile ones, have attentively witnessed what has happened here over the last six years.... The growing sense that the day on which it will be possible to settle accounts with the Zionist state, once and for all, is drawing near. The war in Lebanon is first and foremost a war to rehabilitate Israel's deterrent power in the eyes of the wild Middle East."

VII. "Speaking Middle Eastern"

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in Yediot Aharonot (8/3): "In the Middle East, one does not attack the strong but rather the weak,

especially when he is unprepared. Israel attacked Hizbullah when it was unprepared for war and not expecting it. In the Middle East, one builds deterrence by using enormous military force, and this deterrence is supposed to work for many years. Israel never knew how to effect deterrence, and if any existed, Israel did not create it intentionally. Today, everyone in the Middle East knows that anyone who attacks Israel will pay a heavy, intolerable price, to the point of the destruction of the attacking country... If the IDF had responded with severity when soldiers were kidnapped in 2000, Hizbullah and Iran would not have dared to turn all of Lebanon into their command post. Today Israel has drastically changed the situation: instead of kidnapping being bad for Israel, to the point of blackmailing an entire country, from now on kidnapping will be bad for the kidnapper and the country from which he came.... Welcome to the Middle East, Israel. And paradoxically, precisely thanks to your playing by the rules, the Middle East will accept you. This time it will have no choice."

VIII. "Who Is Encircling Whom?"

Political correspondent Nadav Eyal wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (8/3): "Prime Minister Ehud Olmert made a tactical political mistake on Wednesday when he linked the realignment plan with the fighting in Lebanon, not only because the right wing Knesset members and groups denounced it with such fury, but mainly because the understanding that prevails more and more in the political establishment is that unilateralism has taken a decisive blow in this war. In this matter, the right-wing parties are not important.

After all, they will rule out all territorial concessions on any pretext. What is important here is the erosion of Kadima and the Labor Party. They no longer consider a unilateral solution as a magic formula that will cure any defect in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

IX. "Olmert's New Self-Inflicted Blow"

Columnist Moti Zaft wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe (8/3): "Why should Olmert have tied the realignment, which almost all Israelis -- left- and right-wingers -- believe that given the Gaza Palestinians' behavior after Israel left the Strip, there is no military or political justification to implement, to the IDF's successes in Lebanon? Many of the [Israeli] fighters in Lebanon come from the Jewish settlement drive in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza [i.e. the territories], support it. Either they reside there or they identify with that ideology."

X. "A Good Try, but a Poor Performance"

Diplomatic correspondent Dov Kontorer wrote in conservative Russian-language Vesty (8/3): "Prime Minister Olmert's sophisticated rhetoric -- especially in the interview he granted Reuters on August 2 -- does not match Israel's real achievements in this second Lebanon War, the goals of which had to be corrected several times since the [original] goals determined by GOI three weeks ago were obviously impossible to achieve.... First of all, the war goals recently corrected by Olmert look rather strange. They are more modest, but not cleverer than the ones declared by the Israeli government at the beginning of the conflict. Second, Olmert tries to present the situation in such a way that a successful conclusion of the war becomes an argument in favor of the political agenda ... Kadima party was created for and for which he was elected Prime Minister."

JONES